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# ENTERTAINMENT

## Music: The Mavericks' Triumphant Return on Stage & In Studio

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**THE MAVERICKS -- *IN TIME* \*\*\* 1/2**  
out of \*\*\*\*

**IN CONCERT FEBRUARY 25 IN  
NYC AT THE BOWERY BALLROOM**  
\*\*\*\*

They picked up right where they left off.

A decade after their last studio album, country rebels **The Mavericks** returned to New York City and the Bowery Ballroom. Their new album -- *In Time* -- was hitting stores the next morning. Their seventh studio effort, it's an early favorite for 2013 and a strong addition to their catalog.

Better yet, the band is back on the road. One of the best live acts of the 1990s, **The Mavericks** delivered a generous two and a half hour show that began at 9:30 and ended at midnight, just in time for people to buy that new album on their way home. They certainly got a strong sense of the material: the show featured about eight songs from the new disc, all of them fitting neatly alongside their repertoire of favorites.

The album opener "Back In Your Arms Again" set the tone perfectly for the night, letting the band stretch out in a classic country melody. "Once I said I'd never want your love again," sang lead singer Raul Malo. "But here I am/ Back in your arms again." It's a universal tale of falling again and again for someone not right for you. But of course it's also a knowing acknowledgement of the band's reunion with most of the classic lineup intact, as well as their fans.

Other new songs came fast and furious to strong approval, such as "Lies" and "Born To Be Blue." When a fan obnoxiously called out for something good (meaning a song they knew), Malo paused and said, "I will come down there and kick your ass. We'll celebrate the album's release...in jail."

Better yet, they shut up all doubters with the song "Come Unto Me," a new barnstormer of a tune that's become an immediate fan favorite in concert over the past few months. It begins with a menacing guitar line and great percussion leading into an impassioned Malo vocal joined soon by terrific brass. As the band pauses and Malo growls out, "There is nothing that anyone can say to me," you're reminded why he's been regularly hailed as one of the most impressive voices in popular music, an heir to Roy Orbison in his range and dynamism. The music builds and builds to the rousing, demanding chorus that draws on everything from Elvis to Johnny Cash to south of the border via the accordion and the

band and singer trade off refrains and the music builds again to a crescendo, a thunderous stop... and then launches back again into the chorus. It's the Mavericks at their best.



Frank Sinatra always insisted he was just a saloon singer. In the same way, the Mavericks always pride themselves on being a bar band, albeit the best bar band this side of E Street. The nine members on stage were tight and impressive as they tore through the set list, slowly mixing in classic Mavericks numbers like "What A Crying Shame" and "There Goes My Heart" alongside newer numbers like "Dance In The Moonlight" (during which Malo and lead guitarist Eddie Perez jokingly danced together) and "Amsterdam Moon," which Malo says he wrote in that city one night when he didn't have any drugs. (To which a fan in the audience responded incredulously, "In Amsterdam?" since that is surely one of the harder cities not to have drugs at hand 24 hours a day.)

Even for a special reunion like this, the audience was still filled with its share of yahoos, people who bizarrely come to a concert and then stand in the back and talk loudly. The band just played louder and louder. During a brief acoustic set in which Malo took the stage alone, the dull noise in the back (a constant at the Bowery for even the best acts) just brought out the bar room brawler in Malo, who told his stories at a little higher volume and then launched into two brilliant performances. His rendition of the Patsy Cline classic "Sweet Dreams" was heart-stopping as that voice soared, quieting even the most blase drinker with its beauty. He followed it with a stripped down, simply gorgeous version of one of their biggest hits, "Here Comes The Rain."

Earlier, they brought Rodney Crowell out for an affectionate if ragged and sloppy duet on "Till I Gain Control Again," a gem from the first album of his own that Crowell ever produced. Malo confessed how important Crowell was to the band and that his breakthrough album *Diamonds & Dirt* convinced The Mavericks that their iconoclastic brand of country had a place.

Indeed, just as they did on their albums, the concert slowly expanded from country music to take in all sorts of genres, just as their albums progressed from pure country to the countryopolitan of *Music for All Occasions* to the eclecticism of *Trampoline*. They covered everything from the classic bar band rave-up "Twist & Shout" to Dean Martin's "Sway" to the slinkiest, sexiest version of the Cuban classic "Guantanamera" you'll ever hear.

Throughout the night, the entire band was in sync, with Malo turning up the heat on various numbers, calling for solos spontaneously from certain musicians and then occasionally twirling his finger in the air to tell everyone to keep it going, keep it going when a song was particularly on fire. Everyone shone, with the core members looking pleased as punch to be back on stage, making a wonderful noise that they simply can't create on their own. Repeatedly, Malo thanked the crowd for always welcoming them and for being a pain in the ass by constantly, repeatedly asking when they were going to get back together and tour again.

The night ended as it must with their biggest hit and traditional show closer, "All You Ever Do Is Bring Me Down," another rave-up that allows the band to stretch out, with one terrific musician topping the next on accordion and trumpet and guitar and on and on. It has an infectious break in the melody, followed by Malo belting out "Two! Three! Four!..." and then the entire band bursts back into the song, accordion and vocals and drums and guitars and keyboards and brass and bass all joining together in a riotous display of contained chaos. Many in the audience had been there for four hours, staking their spots at 8 p.m. for a show that began at 9:30 p.m. The band members had waited even longer, going for years and years without most of them appearing on stage together. And here they were again. It hardly seemed like a miracle since it was hard to imagine that a group this special wouldn't get back together at some point. But here they were on stage, with Malo twirling his finger in the air, urging his fellow musicians to keep it going, keep it going and really, you have to wonder why they'd ever stop. "Two! Three! Four!...."

*Thanks for reading. Michael Giltz is the cohost of [Showbiz Sandbox](#), a weekly pop culture podcast that reveals the industry take on entertainment news of the day and features top journalists and opinion makers as guests. It's [available](#) for free on iTunes. Visit Michael Giltz at his [website](#) and his [daily blog](#). Download his podcast of celebrity interviews and his radio show, also called Popsurfing and also [available](#) for free on iTunes. Link to him on Netflix and [gain](#) access to thousands of ratings and reviews.*

**Note:** *Michael Giltz is provided with free tickets to shows with the understanding that he will be writing a review. He also received an advance copy of the album *In Time*. All productions are in New York City unless otherwise indicated.*

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